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Weekly Highlights & Hot Bites, #42

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Report Highlights:

Panel to fix soft drinks standards set up, *Commerce Minister rules out trade-offs in agriculture in WTO negotiations*, *Indian fresh fruits importer delegation to PMA Fresh Summit 2005 very successful*, *India and Denmark sign pact on biotech collaboration*.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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New Delhi [IN1]
[IN]

Welcome to Hot Bites from India, a weekly summary of issues of interest to the U.S. agricultural community. The report includes information that has been garnered during travel within India, reported in the local media, or offered by host country officials and agricultural analysts. Press articles are included in this report. Significant issues will be expanded upon in subsequent reports from this office.

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PANEL TO FIX SOFT DRINKS STANDARDS SET UP

In a recent meeting, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) decided to set up a core committee to finalize the standards for soft drinks by December this year. According to consumer group activists, the key issues of discussions in the meeting were setting standards for caffeine content, pesticide residue, and heavy metals in soft drinks. Labeling was another major subject of discussions. Ms. Sunita Narain, Director, Center for Science and Environment said that consumer groups wanted "health protective standards" for caffeine used in soft drinks and standards for the final product sold, whose scope was limited to soft drinks. (Source: Business Standard, 10/29/04; Business Line, 10/28/04)

Post Comment: For additional details on this subject please see IN4096

COMMERCE MINISTER RULES OUT TRADE-OFFS IN AGRICULTURE IN WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Commerce Minister Kamal Nath has ruled out the possibility of trade-offs between agriculture and other areas under discussion in the WTO negotiations, given the critical role agriculture plays in India's economy. Inaugurating a three-day "Consultation on the WTO Framework Agreement of July 2004: The Way Forward", organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) jointly with the Ministry of Commerce, he said a lot of hard work would have to be done in the next thirteen months so that something concrete could emerge by the time of the next WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong in December 2005. On Agriculture, the Minister said that there should be effective and substantial reductions in domestic support provided by developed countries to their farm sector, which distorted production and prices. He also called for setting an early date for complete elimination of export subsidies in any form, without resorting to the tactic of backloading the commitments or creating loopholes in the guise of food aid concerns. Elimination of subsidies by developed countries "completely and fully, in all its guises" would have to precede their seeking market access from developing countries, he said. (Source: Press Information Bureau, 10/26/04 & Business Standard, 10/27/04)

INDIAN FRESH FRUITS IMPORTER DELEGATION TO PMA FRESH SUMMIT 2005 VERY SUCCESSFUL

The FAS/New Delhi sponsored five-member Indian fresh fruit importer delegation had a highly productive and successful visit to the PMA Fresh Summit 2004 at Anaheim, California. The Indian importers were pleased by the response from US exhibitors at the show, and have each identified 5 to 10 serious contacts for future trade inquiries. One of the importers signed a contract with a US shipper during the show, and two other importers are negotiating contracts. The Indian participants were interested in importing a range of fresh fruits, including apples, grapes, oranges, pears, and grape fruits. Based on the feedback from the Indian delegates, the expected additional annual sales due to this activity are estimated at \$3.5 million.

INDIA AND DENMARK SIGN PACT ON BIOTECH COLLABORATION

India and Denmark signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for promoting cooperation in biotechnology and joint collaboration on specific areas of interest. The MoU envisages exchange of scientists, technicians, training of young scientists, and joint execution of scientific research and development projects. (Source: Financial Express 10/26/04)

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